

The Bloomfield Citizen.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 29, 1887.

Good Reading for Our Boys.

The newspapers have recently been full of the attempt of two young men, aged sixteen and nineteen, first to commit burglary—second to take the life of one who opposed them in their actions, and third to commit suicide. They were unsuccessful as to the burglary, but succeeded in taking the life of a young man named Mead, at White Plains, N. Y. Being followed by a henchman, they simultaneously placed pistols to their own heads. A double report was heard, and the two young men were instantly killed.

It is now said that these young men, named John and Thomas Tristram, were commendable in all their previous life. They were not hoodlums. They frequented no bad resorts, unless we say that the theatre had a share in demoralizing their minds, which it probably had. Otherwise they were stayers at home, had few associates, and spent their spare time in reading. It is what they read that makes the matter interesting to us.

Now what did they read? The answer is positively given that their mental pabulum consisted of dime novels and story papers. They do not appear to have known anything about the treasures of English literature, the inspiring biographies of the brave and true, the thrilling adventures (real and not imaginary) of great travelers, explorers, and sportsmen. Hence they took on false notions of life, and were swept along by a current of sympathetic sensationalism which engulfed them at last in an abyss of crime and shame.

It is very important, then, that this matter of reading should be considered by the parents of all boys, and we venture to suggest in a general way a line upon which success can perhaps be attained.

We would have if we could some general instruction and help given to boys who love to read, and who ought not to be allowed to fill themselves with the east wind, but we are equally far removed from any desire to see the opposite extreme regarded as the true position. We should have a boy's reading just as bright and healthy, and withal, as entertaining, as anything which can be derived from books and papers of the other sort.

It would be well if every boy could accompany Livingston, Barth, Burton, Speke and Grant, Cameron and Stanley to the heart of the Dark Continent. There is no more attractive book upon the Nile and Egypt than Prime's "Boat Life," and such a work as Lane's would add point to Ebers' interesting stories of early days in Egypt. In this and similar lines of reading a good foundation ought to be laid which can be built upon perpetually. And the same course can be pursued with other portions of the globe; yea, and with the heavens themselves.

Books like these which we have mentioned naturally introduce us to other though not perhaps so classic and elaborate volumes. Of course it goes without saying that a boy should have some library or decent private collection to draw upon, yet the cost of books in the Franklin Square Library and in various reprints is now so slight that much of the difficulty of procuring good reading is done away.

There is but little self-denial required in this direction. Better that it should cost the price of a few cigars or other articles which are not indispensable to the comforts of a home, than that the boy should grow up with evil emotions, false opinions and independent crime in his heart. Our space permits us but a single further word. It would be well if those who feel that good can be accomplished in this direction should operate as far as possible through the Y. M. C. A. of Bloomfield. Then we should have at home a centre from which good reading should radiate. The library so formed should embrace the very best of history, travel, biography, adventure, science and the classic authors of English and American literature. With such an end in view the catalogues of well selected public libraries might be examined with profit. Hints on reading can be had in such books as those of Peverett, President Porter, and Richardson. It is also a good thing to substitute St. Nicholas, Wide Awake, Harper's Young People, and the Youth's Companion for flashy periodicals.

Among safe writers for boys we would name "Tom Brown," J. T. Trowbridge, Captain Mayne Reid, W. H. G. Kingston, and R. M. Ballantyne. For those who love the sea take Robinson Crusoe, Swiss Family Robinson, Dana's Three Years before the Mast, and Noddy, and Herman Melville, and W. Clark Russell.

It would be easy to give a list of reputable fiction but any one can see the ideas that should prevail in selection and scope by what has been already said. S. W. D.

Shakespeare and the Stage.

We have received more than one communication, original and otherwise, from our respected readers, in which the degeneracy of the stage, of the present day, was vigorously insisted upon. The theatre had always been bad enough, in the opinion of these good friends, but nowadays it was much worse. The propriety of theatre-going had always been doubtful, but now its doubly vitiated atmosphere rendered it little short of moral suicide.

Some of the stock in trade assertions by which it is always sought to establish this position are, that at the present day, the "grand old plays of Shakespeare" can no longer be produced; that no manager who has any respect for profits dare touch one; that actors can not be found to play them; that audiences are bored by them and will have none of them. These statements only prove the gross ignorance of those who make them, or the lamentable disregard of truth, which many pure and sincere riders of hobbies manifest to the astonishment of disinterested onlookers.

The real fact of the case is that the morality upon the stage was never as pure, or the taste of audiences as high-toned as to-day, and as for Shakespeare, we have within the last ten years seen produced the following of his plays: Hamlet, Henry the Eighth, Macbeth, Romeo and Juliet, As You Like It, Much Ado about Nothing, Midsummer Night's Dream, Cymbeline, Henry the Fifth, Merchant of Venice, Merry Wives of Windsor and Taming of the Shrew. All these we recall, on the spur of the moment, as having seen at least once, and some of them so many times that we have lost all count of the number. So much, then, for the non-production of Shakespeare. And as for appreciation, we have seen many plays, by many authors, and never have we seen greater enthusiasm manifested than that which has attended the production of Henry the Fifth, Romeo and Juliet, As You Like It, Twelfth Night, and Hamlet. But not only are Shakespeare's plays produced so constantly that a season never passes in New York without several of them being presented, and so profitably that money-making is so sure in no other productions, and received so enthusiastically that the audience is limited only by the capacity of the house, but the reputation of some of our greatest actors and actresses rests in large measure upon them, as testify the names of Barrett, Booth, Terry, Coghlan, Modjeska and many another which we need not recall.

These comments are suggested by the recent magnificent revival of the Taming of the Shrew at Mr. Daly's theatre. It is an example and a proof of all we have expressed above. One of the shrewdest, most experienced and financially successful metropolitan managers ventured his money in it, and is reaping golden profit from it. The enthusiasm with which the audience received it, the first night of its production, was something tremendous—the house fairly shook with applause. The casts were superb, and down to the very least. Every part was taken by an actor or actress of genuine merit. Those who know anything about acting and have an idea that modern actors are not at home in Shakespeare should go to Daly's and open their eyes to the truth.

The theater may be good or bad (we are not discussing that now) but if love of Shakespeare behind the scenes and before the footlights be the anchor which is to prevent it from drifting into evil currents, it never was safer.

The Century Company have presented the Watessing Free Public Library with bound volumes of the "Century," and the current numbers in pamphlet form. This is a generous gift and shows that some corporations act as though possessed of souls, after all. We have an idea that this gift will prove to have been wise as well as generous.

LITERARY NOTES.

—Mr. Emile Granier, of Atlantic City, Wyoming, has prepared, after years of study and research, a chronological epitome of American politics. The administration of each president, with the act of Congress for that period is given, and in parallel columns, the records of the leaders, the parties interested, the votes on each question, the reasons therefor, and the discussions on both sides, and at every decade important census extracts, showing at a glance full information on every political question. An ingenious genealogical tree shows the growth of politics from the early discoveries. Important statistics and documents are appended, so that every point on American politics is arranged so as to be instantly referred to.

—William Black, the novelist, was the plaintiff in a libel suit tried in London not long ago. The defendant was John Dick, publisher of "Bow Bells," a magazine which printed a biographical sketch of Mr. Black last November, in which the popular writer was said to have married for money, and to have refused assistance to an aunt who was now in the poorhouse. He testified that his first wife was portless; that

his second, on the death of her father, would get but \$15,000; and that he had never had an aunt. The jury gave him \$500 damages.

—Henceforth Mr. Henri Du Bois will have charge of the "Old Books and New" department of the "Art Amateur"—it could not be in better hands. Mr. Du Bois, who is the New York Correspondent of "Le Livre," is himself an ardent and enlightened collector of books. His brochure on Book-binding, published by the Bradstreet, was a model essay in its way, and already brings a rare price at auction.

—The plates of Gen. Lew Wallace's "Ben Hur" have been entirely worn out by the 152,000 impressions that have been taken from them, and a new set is being cast with a fair prospect that as many more impressions will be taken from it. It is a singular thing that not more than 1,500 copies of the novel were sold during the year after its publication.

—Dr. F. L. Oswald, who contributes frequently to the magazines on topics relating to health, has ready a new work which discusses the cause and cure of intemperance.

—Edward A. Freeman is the editor of the new series of sketches of historical towns of England. "London" is the first volume. "Exeter" and "Bristol" are to follow shortly.

—A new volume in Messrs. Houghton, Mifflin & Co.'s "American Statesman Series" will appear on the 29th. It is devoted to Thomas H. Benton, and is written by Mr. Theodore Roosevelt.

—"Agatha and the Shadow" a story founded on early colonial history, will be the second volume of Robert's "Old Colonial" series, to be ready in a few days.

—"The Cossacks," a tale of the Caucasus in 1850 by Tolstoi, translated direct from the Russian by Eugene Schuyler is now in press.

—"The theosophic rage is responsible for 'Beyond the Golden Gates,' which will explain how the bliss of a future life can be enjoyed in this.

—"Bret Hart's" new book, which will be published immediately by Houghton, Mifflin & Co., contains two stories: "Millionaire of Rough-and-Ready" and "Devil's Ford."

—"The next issue in the 'No Name' series will be 'A Question of Identity' a story of New England life of the day.

—"Gen. C. C. Andrews, formerly U. S. Consul to Rio Janeiro, has prepared for the Appleton's, 'Brazil, its Condition and Prospects.'

—"Common Sense Science," by Grant Allen, being a collection of his recent magazine essays, will be published by Lothrop & Co.

—"The Hungarian Stories" of Karl Edler, edited by the Earl of Lytton, is announced for early issue.

—"A new work from the Danish of P. Mariage, 'Tales of Hellas,' is in preparation for early publication.

—"Joseph Hutton's new novel, 'The Old House at Sandwich,' will be published next month.

—"Messrs. Scribner have in press a new novel, by Mr. John T. Wheeler, entitled 'A Child of the Century.'

THE SOCIAL NEEDS OF LIFE.—Men make a mistake who fail to cultivate the social side of their nature. The man who allows himself to be entirely engrossed by the cares of business and neglects the society of his fellow men attains only a one-sided development, and comes to feel with advancing years that he missed something that would tend to make his mind more rounded and complete. A proper use of the advantages which social organization gives cannot fail to result in good. Men meet their fellowmen in social atmosphere where their ideas broaden, their minds relaxed and their characters cultivated in many ways.

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